Remarks:

Applicant has read and considered the Office Action dated May 26, 2005 and the references cited therein. Claim 1-2 and 18-19 have been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 3-17 have been amended. New claim 20 has been added. Claims 3-17 and 20 are currently pending.

In the Action, claims 1-16, 18 and 19 were rejected as being anticipated by Franklin. Claims 1-2 and 18-19 have been cancelled. Claims 3-16 all now depend directly or indirectly from claim 17, which has been rewritten in independent form and includes features of former claims 1 and 2. As claim 17 was not rejected over Franklin, Applicant asserts that claim 17 distinguishes over Franklin and is allowable, and that the claims depending therefrom are also allowable for the same reasons as well as others.

Claims 1, 2, 5-7 and 14-19 were rejected as being anticipated by Bradley. Claim 17 recites a curtain rail system, provided with at least one safety connection, the safety connection comprising at least one first and one second retaining element, wherein after mounting, one of the retaining elements is coupled to an object to be suspended and the other of the retaining elements is connected to an environment. The first and second retaining elements are detachably connected to each other such that, under influence of a tensile force applied to the retaining elements, the retaining elements disconnect. Claim 17 further recites that the second retaining element comprises at least one integrally formed resilient lip, wherein the first and second retaining elements are configured to cooperate via the at least one integrally formed resilient lip to effect said detachable coupling of the retaining elements. Applicant asserts that Bradley neither teaches nor suggests the curtain rail system.

The Office Action alleges that Bradley discloses a safety connection wherein the resilient lip is part of the second retaining element and the resilient lip 110 is an integral part of the second retaining element 103, 110. Applicant asserts that Bradley does not disclose an integrally

formed lip. Although reference is made to Figure 7, Applicant fails to find any supporting description for the structure shown in Figure 7. Applicant asserts that the structure is similar to that shown in Figures 1-6. The ring 110 shown in Figure 7 corresponds to the rings 51 and 72 shown in Figures 2, 3 and 5. Applicant notes that both of those elements are described as an "O" ring, which is clearly not integrally formed as a portion of the retaining element as recited in the claims of the present application. Moreover, Applicant notes that element 110 has different hatching than the surrounding elements in Figure 7, further indicating that it is not an integrally formed part of the surrounding structure, but is a separate element. Applicant asserts that one of ordinary skill in the art would not understand the Bradley reference to teach or suggest a structure having an integrally formed ring.

Applicant further notes that claim 2 was originally rejected over Franklin as the resilient lip 31 is an integral part of the second retaining element 31 as shown in Figure 2. However, Franklin relates to an animal tether and not to the curtain rail system as recited in claim 17. In addition, Franklin requires locking rings that are threadably connected to a socket. Moreover, Applicant asserts that Franklin and Bradley are related to different fields and different uses and not configured for combination. Applicant asserts that the present invention patentably distinguishes over any combination of Bradley and Franklin.

Applicant asserts that the present invention and the integrally formed resilient lip provides advantages over the prior art as the risk of the two elements becoming jammed to each is reduced. Such problems may be encountered with prior art devices wherein O-rings and other loose elements may jam the locking elements so that they cannot be released from one another.

Claim 20 further recites that the resilient lip extends radially outward. This is neither shown nor suggested by either of the cited devices or any combination thereof. The prior art does not show a radially outward extending integrally formed resilient lip. Such a lip provides advantages for simplistic design and does not allow for a ring slipping out of a recess such as may occur in the Bradley device. Franklin neither teaches nor suggests a radially outward

extending lip and could not function with a radially outward extending lip as the locking rings could not operate. Applicant asserts that any combination of the prior art would not anticipate the presently recited invention.

A speedy and favorable action on the merits is hereby solicited. If the Examiner feels that a telephone interview may be helpful in this matter, please contact Applicant's representative at (612) 336-4728.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.

Dated: 8/26/05

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